

in the heat of summer now. And the farmer who grows these vegetables most likely no longer lives down the road from you. He might live across the ocean or on the other side of the world.

It's more important than ever under these circumstances, now that we're getting the benefits of these new patterns, which are manifold, it's more important than ever that the food we eat be inspected and protected, from orchard to fruit basket, from farm to table, wherever the orchard or the farm may be. And when families join us—and millions and millions of Americans are joining us—as they walk through the produce section, we know that none of them should have to worry about where the food comes from or whether it's safe.

Food safety really is part of the basic contract now between the consumers of our country and their Government. Any food that doesn't meet clear and strict standards should not come into the United States. It's that simple.

Last fall, I announced a new initiative to ensure that fruits and vegetables coming from abroad are as safe as those grown here at home and to halt at the border or the dock any food that fails to meet those standards. I directed the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Agriculture to report on our progress in improving food safety at home and abroad. This is their report; they've just given it to me before we came in here. It is a good and thorough one. It underscores my belief that while we have done a lot, more must be done, and we need the help of Congress to do more.

The next important step to protect America's families from food-borne illnesses requires Congress to enact the bill introduced by Senator Mikulski, Senator Kennedy, and others in the Senate, by Representatives Eshoo, Pallone, and others in the House. This is not a political issue. It's not a Democratic or a Republican issue. It is simply an issue whose time has come. We

are getting all the benefits of global agriculture. We have to rise to the challenges of the same trends. By giving the FDA the tools and the technology it needs, the legislation will give Americans the extra protection they deserve.

At the beginning of the century, Theodore Roosevelt recognized that new challenges demand new Government, in this case, a Government that demands responsibility from industry and producers, but also provides clearer, stricter standards of safety and the means to enforce them. Our families enjoy the greatest bounty and variety of food in the world. We have to ensure that it will also be the safest food in the world.

The 21st century will be interesting for many reasons. Among them will be the increasing variety of food from all over the world that all kinds of Americans will be able to buy in their neighborhood stores. It will be one more way that people, I hope, will have a more enjoyable life in the next century. It will only happen if the food is safe and people know it's safe, so they're not worried when they shop.

Again, I want to join the Vice President, if I might in closing, in thanking the Senate for passing the bill yesterday to reduce the standard of drunk driving to .08. I think it's very important, it will save hundreds of lives a year. I hope the House will follow suit, and I hope that's an indication that these kind of public safety issues will be high on the agenda of Congress and that the bill that our Members who are here today are pushing so hard will find a speedy and positive reception in the Congress.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:03 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gloria Doyle, a victim of acute cyclospora food poisoning attributed to imported fruit in May 1997, who introduced the President.

Statement on the Death of Fred Friendly

March 4, 1998

Hillary and I were deeply saddened today to learn of the death of Fred Friendly. One of the giants of American journalism, Fred started

his career in radio, forming a partnership with Edward R. Murrow on the radio series "Hear It Now," which became the landmark television

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series “See It Now.” To this day, the programs Fred produced four decades ago rank among the finest journalism of the century, exposing the demagoguery of Joe McCarthy, the poverty of migrant farmers, and so many other social ills.

Fred was always willing to challenge the powerful. He led CBS News at a time when television was just beginning to demonstrate its power to the world. When he left CBS, Fred

became a pioneer in public television and public television documentaries. In more recent years, he has served as the conscience of his industry, exploring the ethics of journalism and teaching and training journalists to come. Through his many writings and television productions, he succeeded in his goal: to force the American public to think.

Our prayers today are with Fred’s wife, Ruth, and their children.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Future Political Status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

March 4, 1998

I am pleased that the House of Representatives has passed a bill which establishes a process for determining the future political status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The bill does not impose onerous, unworkable, unprecedented, or unconstitutional language requirements on the citizens of Puerto Rico, unlike some proposals that were advanced in Congress.

I have always called for enabling Puerto Ricans to choose among options available for

their future: continuing the Commonwealth arrangement, independence, or statehood—whatever future decided by majority choice. The House action is a victory for democracy and against exclusion. It is consistent with our country’s repeated commitment to Puerto Rican self-determination, and consistent with the pride all Americans can take in the contributions those of Hispanic descent have made to all America.

Statement on the Accord on a New Railroad Station for New York City

March 4, 1998

Last October, at the request of Senator Moynihan, the White House began meetings with the Department of Transportation, the U.S. Postal Service, the General Services Administration, Amtrak, the Pennsylvania Station Redevelopment Corporation, and local officials to find a way to designate the James Farley Post Office Building in New York City as the new home for Penn Station.

Today I am happy to announce that an accord has been reached on Penn Station and plans

to restore the James Farley Post Office Building are now underway. I applaud Senator Moynihan’s leadership and those involved in creating this magnificent opportunity.

In 1993, I asked Congress to act on a vision to build a new, beautiful railroad station in Manhattan worthy of the future and worthy of New York City. Today that vision has become a reality.